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5 April 1977

Dear Admiral Turner,

I have the pleasure to send you the enclosed edition of the Italian newspaper "IL GIORNALE" calling your attention on the article at page 3, whose title reads "CREMLINO BATTE PENTAGONO" (KREMLIN SURPASSES PENTAGON).

Perhaps you will find it interesting since the author, in his analysis of the current transition phase of the US strategy towards USSR, is referring to the "first public statement of Admiral Stansfield TURNER".

Very Respectfully

P. Pozzi

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To translation 13 Apr

CONCERN OVER GROWING SOVIET MILITARY STRENGTH

Milan IL GIORNALE in Italian 30 Mar 77 p 3

[Article by Mauro Lucentini]

[Text] Washington, March. After 17 years on the shelf, since the days of Kennedy and the so-called missile gap, the issue of U.S. military "superiority" or "inferiority" vis-a-vis the Soviet Union has suddenly leaped into the headlines in America, at the very center of a broad national debate. The preliminary conclusions of the current re-examination are not reassuring to the United States: in his first public statement, Admiral Stansfield Turner, newly named head of the CIA -- nominated by Carter and unanimously confirmed by Congress for his well-known impartiality and competence -- said that "the balance of power is gradually being eroded to the advantage of the Soviet Union," and added that in his judgment the Soviet Union is striving to achieve overwhelming superiority over the United States.

How, in the era of "detente," an issue that had seemed to be relegated, conceptually and materially, to the past has emerged again at center stage in America is a long story. Part of the story has to do with such dramatic events as the defection to the West of a key man in the Russian military apparatus, such psychological traumas as the discovery of the technical excellence of Soviet weapons recently fallen into western hands, the internecine struggles between the CIA and the American military intelligence agencies, and, finally, a re-evaluation of the theoretical underpinnings of the "superiority" concept. It is easiest to begin with that last point in an effort to grasp the overall context of these developments.

It was the enormous intellectual prestige of Henry Kissinger that kept the issue of the material balance of power between the USSR and the United States quiescent for the past several years. What he did was to gain credence for the axiom that "in the nuclear era, the concept of superiority has no place." "What does superiority mean?" was the former Secretary of State's answer when some aspects of the disarmament pacts he had concluded with the USSR since 1972 were challenged, on the

grounds that they seemed to leave the United States at a disadvantage, at least in some sectors. And he added: "The concept of superiority is meaningless when both sides have the capacity to destroy one another not once, but a hundred times over."

So Kissinger replaced the superiority-inferiority antithesis with the concept of inevitable parity, based on the fact that in the nuclear age the two superpowers are perforce in the same state of extreme vulnerability, coupled with tremendous offensive capacity. Gradually, though, even the concept of parity proved a clumsy tool for justifying the balance of power as it emerged from successive Soviet-American agreements, and it was in turn replaced with increasingly more abstract and flexible units of measurement: "equivalence," then "rough equivalence," and finally "sufficiency." With that last key word went the idea that when a country like the United States possesses "sufficient force" to inflict "intolerable" damage on its adversary, that country has no logical reason to concern itself with the actual strength of the enemy's forces.

The strategic turningupoint in the scrapping of the "superiority" concept was the adoption of the criterion of "mutual assured destruction" ("Mad," for short, a word which in English means insane or madness) as the basis for American arms policy, on the wholly gratuitous assumption that the Soviet Union had also decided to adopt it as a premise for its own policy.

Introduced at the Pentagon under Melvin Laird, "Mad" implied that the best guarantee against the eventuality of nuclear war was to make the use of nuclear weapons absolutely catastrophic for both adversaries. Once both sides were certain that catastrophe would indeed be inevitable, neither could ever risk starting a nuclear war. A corollary to this theorem was that both parties would pledge not to acquire what was called "first-strike capability," by which was meant launching a surprise attack which would wipe out the opponent's retaliatory (second-strike) capacity.

On the practical level, this theoretical approach meant that any agreement negotiated between the U.S. and the USSR would be considered successful to the degree to which it would maximize the destruction in a war (in other words, assured peace depends on assured destruction). This is why the first arms agreement reached in 1972 between Richard Nixon and the USSR was hailed as a triumph: it banned construction of anti-missile missile defenses, thus deliberately making the population centers of both countries totally vulnerable in case of nuclear war.

The cities of both countries, in other words, were offered as "hostages to peace." The 1972 anti-ABM pact is considered the cornerstone of the entire SALT structure. Its immediate consequence was the adoption by the Pentagon of an "anti-cities"

strategy, meaning deliberate destruction of the Soviet cities in case of nuclear war, in place of the so-called "counterforce" strategy, which meant destruction of the adversary's nuclear installations, which would have made much more sense if the possibility of nuclear war were actually taken into consideration.

Renunciation of the concept of "superiority" is still part of the American theoretical baggage, as President Carter indicated in his first speech to the United Nations, in which he emphasized the point that the superpowers today possess a reciprocal destructive potential far in excess of any plausible defense requirements. There was, however, a subtle shift in the sense that the renunciation is now considered more as a desirable objective for the future than as an actual reality: in practice, the "superiority" concept has crept back into the American strategic vision, both because of the objections raised over its scrapping, and because of the hard facts about Soviet behavior as they have emerged from intelligence reports.

First to challenge the prevailing conceptual structure -- "sufficiency," "Mad," the "anti-cities strategy" -- was former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, who, in the light of reports as to Soviet policy in the arms sector, in May 1974 altered the Pentagon's strategic stance, restoring as one of its objectives a partial "counterforce capability," by which he meant at least a partial capacity to destroy the adversary's nuclear installations. There is no need to remind readers, of course, that for having contradicted Kissinger's theoretical doctrines, Schlesinger wound up out of a job, or that he has been summoned back aboard in the Carter administration, although, for the time being, only as coordinator of energy policy.

After Schlesinger, the traditional thinking in the area of arms and of negotiations with the USSR came under steady fire from critics, both in academic circles and in the political and military arenas. These attacks may be classified roughly as follows:

1. It is misleading to separate nuclear weapons from conventional weapons in calculating the balance of power between the two countries, particularly when, in certain areas of absolutely vital importance to the United States, such as Europe, conventional weapons alone can determine the outcome of a military clash.
2. The concept of a balance of power is valid only in the context of politics: weakness and strength are not mere abstractions, but they take on significance only in relation to political objectives. This second argument, too, is particularly cogent if it is applied to Europe, to the political intentions, in Europe, not only of the USSR but also of the United States, and it is therefore inevitably complicated on the one hand by the debate over isolationist tendencies in the United States, and on the other by the Soviet attitude toward its European satellites and by the emergence of "Eurocommunism."

Contributing to this side of the debate have been such people as Paul Nitze, the former American negotiator for disarmament; Walter Laqueur, of the Institute for Strategic Studies in Washington, Richard Pipes of Harvard, and others. A recently completed mission to Europe, headed by two Democratic members of Congress, Bartlett and Nunn, reported a situation of unsustainable and increasing inferiority among NATO forces vis-a-vis the Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces, and thus helped call the Carter administration's attention once again to the question of "superiority," an effort doubtless facilitated by the personal relationship between these two legislators and President Carter. And finally, even Admiral Turner is one of the protagonists in the current debate, thanks to a series of naval surveys he conducted before he was tapped to head the CIA, in which he analyzed the relationship between military capacity and political objectives ("A sensible approach to the problem of superiority," he wrote in the January issue of FOREIGN AFFAIRS, "does not consist in a numerical comparison of naval forces, but in determining whether the United States, with the naval forces it now has, and given the existence of adversary naval forces in the various sectors, is or is not capable of performing the missions essential to the defense of its own interests.").

But what has contributed most to the current evolution in Washington is a series of extraordinary revelations about Soviet strategy in the matter of armaments and about the alleged political and military objectives of the USSR, which call for detailed treatment elsewhere.

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